

REMARKS

Claims 1-29 remain in this application. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Independent claims 1, 12, 20, and 26 are rejected, along with various dependent claims, as anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,941,648 to Kimura. Certain dependent claims were also rejected as unpatentable over the Kimura patent in view of U.S. Patent 4,802,648 to Decker. Reconsideration is requested.

The Kimura patent does not disclose a noise muffling method as defined by claim 1 including expanding an air cushion so that the air cushion rests at least indirectly on a surface of each of two components as specified. Air-filled part 16 of the Kimura device is identified by the Examiner as "an air cushion". Nothing in the Kimura patent, however, suggests expanding the air-filled part 16 "so that the air cushion rests at least indirectly against at least one surface respectively of each of the components" as claim 1 requires. The top portion of the Kimura cylindrical upper case 18a rests against upper base panel 20, but diaphragm 15 does not and can not rest, directly or indirectly, against lower base panel 21. The diaphragm 15, instead, must be movable with respect to the lower base panel 21 to facilitate liquid flow through orifice 13a.

Claim 12, directed to a noise absorber for successive components, includes similar language. The Kimura air-filled part 16 is not and cannot be "expandable so that it rests at least indirectly on at least one surface respectively" of each of

the panels 20 and 21, as claim 12 requires, for reasons discussed above in connection with claim 1.

Claim 20, directed to a passenger motor vehicle assembly, specifies that cover surface sections of an air cushion are pressed "so that said cover surface sections contact the respective components when in an installed position". Again, the air-filled part 16 of the Kimura device is identified by the Examiner as "an air cushion". Nothing in the Kimura patent suggests that a cover surface section of the Kimura air-filled part 16 ever contacts the lower base panel 21.

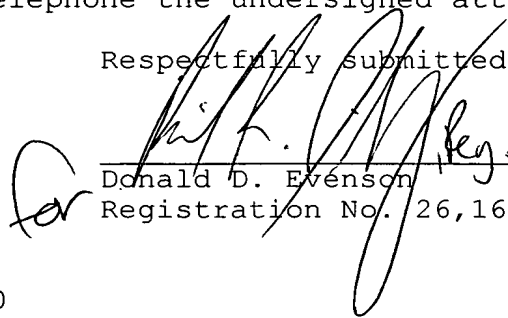
Finally, claim 26, directed to a noise transfer muffling method, specifies applying pressure to an air cushion to force air cushion cover surface sections "toward an operating position in which the cover surface sections rest against the vehicle components." As discussed in connection with claim 1, nothing in the Kimura patent suggests that a cover surface section of the air-filled part is forced toward a position in which it rests against the vehicle component formed by the lower base panel 21.

For reasons discussed above, none of independent claims 1, 12, 20, and 26 is anticipated by the Kimura patent. U.S. Patent 4,802,648 to Decker et al., moreover, does not suggest modifying the Kimura shock absorbing device to incorporate the features discussed above, and it is respectfully submitted that each of claims 1, 12, 20, and 26 is patentable. The remaining, dependent, claims of this application are patentable as well.

This application is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions after considering this Reply, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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Donald D. Evenson
Registration No. 26,160

CROWELL & MORING, LLP
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844
DDE:RRD:msy